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CIA Critic Arrested at L.A. Airport

Professor Sought on Theft Charges, U.S. Custom Agents Say

By ERIC MALNIC,
Times Staff Writer

A local university professor and CIA critic was arrested by U.S. Customs agents who seized his books, microfilm, videotapes and slides as he returned to Los Angeles from a trip through Latin America, officials said Thursday.

Fred Landis, a political science teacher at California State University, Los Angeles, and author of a book critical of U.S. intelligence operations in Chile, was taken into custody at Los Angeles International Airport on Monday on an auto theft warrant stemming from a dispute with a car rental agency.

Like those of all people passing through customs here, Landis's name was run through a computer upon his arrival, "and we got a hit," said Jerome Hollander, a public affairs officer for the U.S. Customs Service.

"It indicated that he was a fugitive . . . and the warrant was still outstanding," Hollander said. "On that basis he was arrested."

Suspicion Alleged

"The inspector then became suspicious that he (Landis) might be in violation of a section of the U.S. Code dealing with sedition . . . The microfilm, (plus) the fact that he came here from Cuba, probably aroused that suspicion."

"We detained certain items—videotapes, the microfilm, books and slides—to see whether they were in violation of that section."

Landis told his attorney that the inspector had advised him that the

Landis suggested that the CIA helped stage the coup in Chile.

confiscated materials "were going to be turned over to the CIA," but Hollander said the items remained in the custody of the Customs Service.

Hollander "categorically" denied that Landis's earlier criticism of the CIA had anything to do with the arrest or the confiscation of the professor's property.

"It was a routine Customs matter," Hollander said.

In the late 1970s, Landis published a book, "Death in Washington," about the assassination of Orlando Letelier, Chile's foreign minister under the Marxist government of Salvador Allende.

In the book, Landis suggested that the CIA helped stage the bloody coup that overthrew Allende. In his accusations, Landis named some CIA personnel, including the CIA's case officer for Chile, David Atlee Phillips.

Phillips and other former CIA agents have sued Landis over the book.

Spokesmen for the Covert Action Information Bulletin, published in Washington, D.C., say Landis is a frequent contributor. His most recent article, "CIA Media Operations in Chile, Jamaica and Nicaragua," was published in the bulletin on Wednesday.